

Polk County Itemizer-Observer

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EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

More than 60 students, faculty and staff at Western Oregon University gathered Saturday for a candlelight vigil in support of the victims and survivors of a mass-casualty shooting at Umpqua Community College.

STEPS TO RECOVERY

Mass-casualty shooting in Roseburg touches everyone; would we be ready?

By Emily Mentzer
 The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — A bell chimed and a moment of silence was held Saturday night at Western Oregon University for each person who was shot and killed at Umpqua Community College on Thursday.

Nine times that bell chimed, following the reading of each person's name. Rebecca Strader, a pastor at WOU and in Falls City, helped organize the candlelight vigil, hosted by Western Compass Campus Ministry and attended by more than 60 students and employees.

The event provided a time and place for students and staff at Western to mourn the mass-casualty event that brought attention from around the world, another school shooting, this time in Roseburg.

Watching the events unfold so close to home made it clear: it could happen anywhere.

"I don't think you're ever ready, to be honest," said Re-



People helped each other light candles in remembrance.

becca Chiles, WOU's public safety director. "But we are preparing. We are trying to make sure that our community is prepared."

Chiles said she has learned from things that didn't go quite as planned in Roseburg. The college's public safety notification system failed during the active shooter event.

"We tested our alert system this morning," Chiles said Monday. "It went well. We've learned new things



Upgrades have made it possible for Western's stu-

dents to add their parents to the alert system, Chiles said.

A few weeks ago, public safety started hosting a class called ALICE — alert, lock-down, inform, counter, evacuate.

"We're teaching that to both our students and our faculty and staff," Chiles said. "It teaches people, and gives them options from the moment that they are alerted that an active shooting is happening, to the moment that law enforcement arrives to engage the shooter."

Media relations for WOU Lisa Catto said she believes the campus is ready for an emergency such as an active shooter.

"Over the past week or so, a printed emergency procedure quick guide was distributed around campus," she said. "One of the sections details how to respond in an active shooter situation."

Also, the ALICE training was given to new students during New Student Week, Catto said.

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Meadow Creek property tax up 56 percent

Real market values increased, assessor says, while seniors are outraged

By Jolene Guzman
 The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Residents of Meadow Creek Village, a manufactured home park in Dallas, received unwelcome news in their mailbox a few weeks ago.

Each of the approximately 100 residents opened a letter from the Polk County Assessor's saying property taxes were about to increase — a lot. The increase was on average 56 percent, the largest Polk County Assessor Doug Schmidt had seen in seven years as the assessor and 18 years before that as an employee in the office.

The residents, needless to say, were

none-to-pleased. "We are all angry," said Meadow Creek resident Vera Cronin. "We all feel like we are being penalized."

On Thursday during a meeting at Meadow Creek, Schmidt heard that, and a number of other concerns from residents wondering why their taxes could make such a huge leap in one year.

Schmidt answered that it was a product of home sales in the park that occurred between January 2014 and March 2015.

Seven sales were completed in that time period, six of which sold for amounts significantly more than the

assessor's office had for real market value on the properties.

The pattern was too consistent for the office to ignore, Schmidt said.

"Those seven sales are indicators of what we felt the market value was," he told the crowd of about 60 gathered to the park's clubhouse Thursday.

Sale prices ranged from \$32,500 to \$55,000, in some cases double what the office had as real market value.

Noticing the trend, Schmidt separated the park from other similar parks in the county — before this, they were assessed as a group — and reassessed all the properties in Meadow Creek.

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IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

If you have a disabled parking placard, do you know what your privileges are parking in the timed parking zones in downtown Dallas?

Dallas Police Chief Tom Simpson said it's a cause of confusion for permit users from time to time because the rules can vary by city or county.

There are three types of parking placards.

Simpson said disabled parking placards allow holders to park in marked disabled parking spaces, but the same rules apply to them when parking in timed spaces or metered spaces as to anyone else.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

Every winter those living in an approximately square mile zone near Sheldon Avenue in Falls City experience frequent and sudden flooding.

Thanks to more than 18 months of detective work on the part of Oregon State University students, namely master's degree candidate, Joe Kemper, residents in the area are closer to finding a cause.

Kemper, a master's degree candidate in the field of water resources engineering, is using the project as his thesis subject. He hopes to find feasible fixes for residents who have been dealing with the problem for decades.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Pending council approval, youths coming and going across the city border with Monmouth will no longer be confused about curfew.

A proposed change to the curfew ordinance will make it easier for officers to understand, too, said Independence Police Chief Bob Mason at a joint city council work session on Sept. 29.

The councils and mayors from Monmouth and Independence listened to a joint presentation by police chiefs Mason and Darrell Tallan on the topic.

The concerns about the inconsistent curfews between the two cities came up at Independence's April council meeting.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

An open house from 5 to 7 p.m. on Thursday will be held at the Monmouth Senior Center to thank the community for its dedication to seeing the expansion project completed.

Because of fundraising efforts by the Friends of the Monmouth Senior Center, donations from the community, contributions from the city of Monmouth, and grants from the Collins Foundation, Oregon Community Fund, Meyer Memorial Trust and Ford Family Foundation, the senior center has raised enough money to be able to pay for the expansion.

For more information: 503-838-5678.

POLK COUNTY NEWS

More than 140 students attending schools in Dallas, Central, Falls City and Perrydale experienced homelessness during the 2014-15 school year, according to a state report released last week.

For the purposes of the report, homeless students are defined as: living in shelters, staying in a motel, sharing housing with relatives or friends, or living in a car, tent or other substandard housing.

According to the report released by the Oregon Department of Education on Thursday, two local school districts saw increases in the number students considered homeless: Dallas and Falls City.

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK 	wed Pick up your crochet hook or knitting needles and join Yarning for Others in making clothing for those in need. 3-5 p.m. Free. AM Showers Hi: 72 Lo: 52	thu Young Professionals aged 21 to 45 gather once a month at businesses throughout the county to network. 5:30 p.m. Free. Partly Sunny Hi: 74 Lo: 53	fri Listen to the unique style of 3 Leg Torso at Western Oregon University, part of the Smith Fine Arts Series. 7:30 p.m. \$28. Partly Cloudy Hi: 75 Lo: 59	sat Tour the Brunk House at a cider-pressing event. Enjoy apple desserts and pick up a gallon of fresh cider. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. \$5. Rain Hi: 68 Lo: 54	sun Eat pancakes, hash browns or French toast, sausage and eggs at the Buell Grange's monthly breakfast. 8-11 a.m. \$6. Partly Cloudy Hi: 68 Lo: 50	mon Oct. 12 annually celebrates National Freethought Day. It is anniversary of the effective end of the Salem Witch trials on Oct. 12, 1692. Mostly Cloudy Hi: 68 Lo: 48	tue Try your hand at crafting fun at Independence Public Library, where families may create fall crafts. 4 p.m. Free. Sunny Hi: 73 Lo: 46
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